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School boards adopt plan to reduce the shock of skyrocketing electricity bills

TIM WHITNELL
Special to The IFP

Halton's two major school boards have a plan to take some of the shock out of their escalating electricity bills.

Armed with the promise of \$90,000 in funding for the next three years from the region's four electrical utilities, the Halton public and Catholic boards are embarking on a venture to educate staff and students about energy consumption.

The Conservation Education and Demand Management Program is a three-year partnership co-ordinated by the Halton Learning Foundation—the fundraising body of the Halton District School Board—involving the Halton public and Catholic school boards and the four local distribution companies (LDCs) that provide electricity to the region—Burlington Hydro, Halton Hills Hydro, Milton Hydro and Oakville Hydro Energy Services.

The goal is to develop and implement strategies that result in significant reductions in electricity consumption within Halton's schools.

Using a combination of existing Ontario EcoSchools resources and modified and new resources, the program will provide information and training to enable school staff to identify and carry out actions that are intended to produce savings both financially and environmentally.

Halton public board business superintendent Steven Parfeniuk said they have budgeted \$3 million for the board's electrical costs during the current school year. The forecast was to consume 49,100 megawatts (49 billion, 100 million watts) of power during 2006-07.

"Our across-the-board costs for electricity are going up 5-10 per cent per year," noted Parfeniuk.

He said spikes in electricity costs have been tempered somewhat by the board's membership in a power-buying consortium of 46 Ontario school boards.

Parfeniuk said he didn't know enough about the new board-wide program to speculate on anticipated savings but said the game plan is simple.

"The No. 1 thing we can all do to save energy is turn the lights off." If you're energy-conscious at home, "Take that attitude to your workplace," he said.

One aspect of the new energy conservation

program is a 'Haltonized' guide being distributed to the project's stakeholders, said Ron Ballentine, the Halton public board's co-ordinator of science and technology, and environmental education.

The guide contains provincial research statistics and Halton public board figures for 2005-06 concerning electrical usage, primarily via computer monitors and general lighting. Websites, posters and stickers are also part of the training and information being made available to school staff.

"Everything we do environmentally we do it together," Ballentine said of the two Halton school boards.

He said the boards will have equitable access to the multi-year funding from the local utilities.

"It depends on the need each year, (but) we have identified what to work on first. Building (environmental control) automation systems aren't new but the modifications and additions to the equipment, the new software or techniques, are."

However, the attitude of consumers, as much as the new products themselves, can have a positive impact on

energy usage, said Halton board facilities superintendent Gerry Cullen, noting he is emphasizing the program's potential to change the attitude of school staff and students over any anticipated cost savings.

"It's not really a dollars and sense issue as much as the right thing to do. We don't have a lot of big industrial (electrical) stuff. For us it's lighting," Cullen said of the board's biggest source of electricity consumption.

Ballentine said lighting accounts for about 15 per cent of electrical costs in a typical home but about 45 per cent in schools and board administrative offices. Lights and computer hardware are the prime culprits, items that students and staff can exercise some control over, he said.

"It's computer monitors and peripherals, like printers, but mostly the monitor—it uses more energy than any other part of the computer."

Heating and air-conditioning are centrally controlled and the responsibility of the school/building custodian and may not end up as part of an energy action plan.

Each school will assemble an Eco Team. Comprised of an administrator—likely a principal—a teacher, custodian and several students, Ballentine said it will be akin to an environmental club.



STEVEN PARFENIUK

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Source Water Protection Committee Expressions of Interest and Nominations for Chair

Credit Valley / Toronto and Region /
Central Lake Ontario Source Protection Region

On behalf of the proposed CTC source protection region—comprised of the Credit Valley, Toronto and Region and Central Lake Ontario conservation authorities—Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) is seeking expressions of interest and/or nominations for the position of chair of the CTC Source Protection Planning Committee. When proclaimed, the *Clean Water Act, 2006*, will authorize the Ontario Minister of the Environment to appoint the chair of the source protection committee, after considering any recommendations from the lead source protection authority of a source protection region/area. In order to provide sufficient time to identify suitable nominees, the CTC conservation authorities are starting the selection process now.

To be considered as a candidate, a letter expressing interest and/or nomination for the position of chair must be received by **4:30 p.m. local time on Monday, April 16, 2007**. Requirements for content of letters and additional information may be found at www.trca.on.ca or by calling Karen Hortopan, communications administration coordinator, CTC Region at 416-661-6600 ext. 5392.

Submit letters to:

Mr. Brian Denney, chief administrative officer
Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, CTC Region
5 Shoreham Dr., Downsview, Ontario, M3N 1S4
email sourcewater@trca.on.ca or fax 416-667-6278

